



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 11, 1997

Washington, D.C. -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is seeking congressional authorization to proceed with a plan to meet the health-care needs of veterans in northern California through an array of contractual agreements, including VA use of up to 100 beds at the David Grant Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base.

Accepting the recommendations of a recent assessment of needs performed for VA by Price Waterhouse and other independent contractors, VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer said, "After carefully reviewing the report and the many public comments it generated, I can only conclude that implementing these recommendations offer several compelling advantages for fulfilling our commitment to veterans in northern California."

VA is asking Congress to redirect \$70.8 million in previously appropriated funds for the following projects:

- Renovating and expanding the existing McClellan Hospital at Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento to provide 55 inpatient beds (\$48.0 million)
- Constructing a new VA outpatient clinic at Travis Air Force Base (\$13.5 million)
- Upgrading the existing outpatient clinic at the former Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo (\$3.1 million)
- Upgrading the existing Martinez VA outpatient clinic (\$3.0 million)

Additionally, VA will develop community-based outpatient clinics in Auburn, Chico, Eureka and Merced, and will pursue contracting with community facilities for inpatient services in Martinez and Redding.

VA is also developing plans to assist veterans with transportation to VA facilities when they do not have transportation resources of their own.

"This comprehensive plan will dramatically improve veterans' access to inpatient care in this area, provide flexibility to meet their special and changing health-care needs, plus save considerable taxpayer dollars," Kizer added.

In the fall of 1996, Congress directed VA to reassess its earlier plan to construct a new 243-bed VA hospital at Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, Calif. The Travis hospital was slated to replace the VA medical center in Martinez, Calif., which was closed in 1991 because of seismic deficiencies. A 1996 General Accounting Office report concluded "that the Travis construction project is not justified and that lower-cost alternatives should be more fully explored."